to improve productivity of Coconut plantations:—

(i) Integrated farming in coconut small holdings for productivity improvement.

This programme provides incentive subsidy to farmers for the following:

(a) Cutting and removal of disease affected / senile / unproductive palms @Rs. 200/- per palm.

(b) Replanting with quality seedlings @Rs. 5/- per seedling.

(c) Fertilizer application and plant protection measures @ Rs.8/- per palm.

(d) Adoption of multispecies cropping @ Rs. 200/- per ha.

(ii) *Production and distribution of Tall and Dwarf Hybrid seedlings.*

50% financial assistance is given to the State Government under this programme.

(iii) *Establishment of DSP Farm for Coconut.*

A demonstration-cum-Seed production Farm for Coconut is being established by the Coconut Development Board at Vegiwada in West Godawari District of Andhra Pradesh in an area of 179.48 acres.

(iv) *Integrated Control of Leaf eating Caterpillar.*

A parasite breeding laboratory has been sanctioned to multiply and release parasites for control of pest, leaf eating Caterpillar, by extending 50% financial assistance to the State Government.

Floriculture in Maharashtra

1667. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have formulated any action plan for the development of commercial floriculture in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the details thereof?

(c) the funds released to the State for the purpose during the last three years, year-wise; and

(d) the role being played by the State Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation is implementing a Central Sector Scheme of Commercial Floriculture throughout the country including the State of Maharashtra. The Model Floriculture Centre is being set up at Rajgur Nagar near Pune in Maharashtra, for supply of elite planting material and for training and demonstration purposes. Assistance is also being provided at the rate of Rs. 60,000/- per ha. for expansion of area under flowers.

(c) During the year 1996-97 a sum of Rs. 25 lakhs was released to State under the Scheme. However no funds could be relased during 1995-96 and 1997-98 because of the unspent balance, lying with the State Government.

(d) The State Government is implementing the Central Sector Scheme for commercial floriculture. An area of 147 hectares has been brought under flower cultivation so far. The State Government is encouraging greenhouse cultivation for export.

Rescue of Cotton Farmers from Middlemens' Clutches

1668. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the middlemen are looting cotton farmers especially in Andhra Pradesh by denying them remunerative prices for their produce;

(b) the price of cotton fixed by the Cotton Corporation of India and the price at which the cotton farmers are selling their produce in Andhra Pradesh; and

(c) the measures proposed to help the distressed cotton farmers to save them from the clutches of middlemen?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) No, Sir. Cotton is sold in the market yards in open auction where both the agencies i.e. respective State Marketing Federations (In Andhra Pradesh, A.P. State Marketing Federation) and the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) participate. Hence, cotton is sold in the market at competitive prices. However, those farmers who do not participate in the open auctions but prefer to sell at village levels, in such cases it is likely that they may not get competitive prices.

(b) and (c) To safeguard the interests of the cotton growers, the Government of India announces every year the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) of cotton for F-414/H-777 and H-4 varieties to give incentive to the farmers for higher investment and adoption of modern techniques. The prices of other varieties of cotton are fixed by the Ministry of Textiles on the basis of price differentials of these two basic varieties. The MSP for 1997-98 crop season has been fixed at Rs. 1330 per quintal for F-414/H-777 and Rs. 1530 per quintal for H-4 variety. The wholesale prices in the open market including those in Andhra Pradesh have been ruling above the MSPs.

Changes in Farm Practices

1669. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are contemplating to induce changes in the existing system of farm practices;

(b) if so, on what aspects of farm practices the new policy will be focusing;

(c) whether it is a fact that in some area farmers are over-using fertilizers and pesticides;

(d) the agencies which will be used to educate farmers about the optimal use of land, water and genetic resources; and

(e) the other details thereof

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) Government proposes to induce changes in existing farming practices by popularsing cropping system based agriculture on watershed basis in rainfed areas, diversification of cultivation, adoption of better water conservation techniques such as sprinkler/drip irrigations methods, etc.

(c) Average consumption of fertilisers and pesticides in India is on lower side as compared to several other countries though wide variations in consumption are observed across States and even within regions in some States.

(d) and (e) Farmer education is imparted through Agricultural Universities set-up by Indian Council for Agriculture; Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs); Extention Network operated by State Agriculture Departments, and other agencies such as Mitra Krishak Mandals.

Development of Model Fishermen's Villages in Andhra Pradesh

1670. SHRI V. KISHORE CHANDRAS DEO: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether representations have been received for development of Model Fishermens villages in the districts of Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam and West Godavari in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details of such representations received in 1998, so far;

(c) whether any report has been called from Andhra Pradesh in this regard;

(d) if so, whether any reply has been received;

(e) whether technical asistance and advice will be given by Government in formulation of such proposals from States; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?